

Conversation with 16 year old black male, Washington, DC (Transcription)

START

Do you have a pet?

INF Cat. And a hamster.

FW A hamster too?

INF It's not mine, but it's my little brother's.

FW How does he take care of that? Of the hamster. What do you have for him to stay in?

INF We have a cage for the hamster stay in and then ah you keep paper in the cage and you know, keep him fed <unintelligible text> water just about everyweek.

FW What does he feed him?

INF Hamster food. It's <unintelligible text> special food for the hamster.

FW Buy the stuff. You only get one?

Library of Congress

INF (yes). We had two. One of them died.

FW If you got a pair you'd soon have dozens running around here.

INF I think he had to males or two females you know, never did <gap> 'cause had them about a year before the one died. Then they went <gap> and got another one but it still must have been two males or two females because still didn't have but two of them and you know they always were fighting and they they run all night and play, you know, sleep all day.

FW

#0036 p.6

FW What's the cat's name?

INF Tom.

FW Did he ever do anything funny?

INF Yeah, quite often.

FW What'd he do?

Library of Congress

INF Comes up in the room, get in the bed, you know jumps up in the window, on the screen, run back down. Runs all the time.

FW Does he get in fights or anything?

INF (no)

FW Do you let him out at night occasionally?

INF No, we keep him in. Take him out in the day time. You know -- still a kitten.

FW Oh, it's still a kitten. What do you feed him?

INF Cat food. Milk, water sometimes. He very seldom drinks water.

FW Are you still inschool?

INF (yes)

YW What do you study?

INF English, math, geography, and civics. Two periods of shop.

FW What kind of shop?

Library of Congress

INF General shop. That's any -- take up anything you want.

FW Where do you go to school?

INF At

FW What did you study back in elementary school? Do you remember?

INF English and language and you know... elementary was different from high school. It was mostly -- you study in one class all day. And she would give you -- maybe arithmetic in the morning and spelling and maybe reading. That's in the morning. After lunch she probably give you language and some other -- maybe art in the evening -- or music.

#0036 p.7

FW What did kids do in elementary after school was out?

INF We -- get out of school, run around, go in the store, you know jive around the store, come on out, play by the alley before we went home. Then the group I with you know -- some of them went right home, a whole lot of times we stayed around the playground the school. Chase the girls, then finally end up home.

FW Kids do about the same things all little kids

Library of Congress

INF They do about the same thing. I said to my little brother, you know I have a little brother, he's in elementary and he do about the same thing I did.

FW What do the kids your age do?

INF Usually go home, stay on the corners of you know -- go play basketball, anything -- most of them -- some have jobs after school, go on the job,

FW Did you ever have a teacher that hollered alot?

INF Yeah, I've got one now.

FW Oh, yeah? What does she holler about?

INF Just, you know, I think she just hollers to hear herself holler to tell you the truth. 'cause you know, come in the class and -- sit down, leaVe and -- get in line. You know, anything. Just to holler, just to hear herself holler.

FW Did she ever single you out?

INF Once or twice.

FW Think it was fair or... do you think she was just being a grouch?

Library of Congress

INF I say she was fair. I know one time she <unintelligible text> you know it was one of the days everybody having fUn, I think soon as gets warm <unintelligible text> you know how you go to class after playing basketball and you're warm you know and you might get to talking - I guess she you know didn't want to let us know before it got any hotter this year where she stood, you know,

#0036 p.8

FW What about the best teacher you ever had, do you remember who that was?

INF That's my civics teacher.

FW What makes her so good?

INF I like her because she take time, you know, to teach and she devote all her time to her students, you know, like she have lunch period-- a free period and <unintelligible text> one day she'll tell you the following day see you on the free period or at lunch period and you know about your subject or if you come after school, she'll help you make up <unintelligible text> what you missed.

FW Did you ever have a teacher you just couldn't stand?

INF Let me see. Yeah, one. She, you know, I think she was prejudiced - something you know. She, she I was, you know she was always talking about race. I was ah it was me and another Negro in her class --with white the rest of the children were white children andyou know, she called me double trouble, you know, we don't do this and we don't do

Library of Congress

that. And one time you know she gave me F's so my mother told me you know -- save all my work that I did you know. I told her I had - notebook full of work so she told me just keep it in order this time you know and if she gave me another F next time -- so every paper I did I saved it and you know, put the date on it, and the grade was on it that she put on it. Gave book reports, put the date on it, and you know she failed me again. I took it home, my mother took it to the office you know, and then they looked at it. They called her down. She said it was a mistake.

FW Were you ever in a class where the kids played a joke on the teacher? A trick.

INF (no). Let's see... last year I was. I believe it was April Fool's Day. Put a tacks on a piece of tape and the teacher sat on there. You know, one instance, I don't think it was really a joke -- a teacher felt a kid. He took all the tires off the car.

#0036 p.9

Which ah you know he didn't take them off, he loosened all the wheels. And I think somebody told her before she drove off. She never did find out her did it you know. Somebody told her somebody took the wheels loose.

FW What happened when the put the tacks down. The teacher she sat on them, but she kind of hot -- she says she was going to fail everybody in class. But, I think, she found out who did it, you know. He was put out of school.

FW When you were back there in elementary again was there a certain group that you hung around with?

Library of Congress

INF It was ah...beginning of fourth I think, was me and the other boys always together, after school, during school, Saturday's and Sundays. Went to the show together you know and couple of girls, we had our girl friends.

FW What all did you do together?

INF We got -- mostly we got in trouble together. If one of us was in trouble, you know, <unintelligible text> It wasn't any real trouble you know, but <gap> young, and we always called ourselves big boys, you know, went to movies with <unintelligible text> girls. Never did <gap> met them at the movies <unintelligible text> they was in before we got there.

FW Were one of you sort of the leader? And the other three followed him or didn't it work that way?

INF No. It didn't work that way, really. We always looked up to one another, you know. It was the oldest one that was...Earl... we always looked up to him. Because he was biggest, biggest of us. See, when I was in elementary school I weighed hundred eighty pounds and now I weight ah one hundred and fifty-five. I'm five eleven. I was about four feet two, four feet three. Short fat boy then you know. Couldn't move around too much.

FW Was it mostly 'cause he was the biggest?

INF He was, you know he he the most ideas,

FW Suppose a new kid had moved in and wanted to hang around, would he have been able to do it?

Library of Congress

#0036 p.10

FW What would he have had to do?

INF He wouldn't have had to really do nothing. Maybe a fight, see if he can fight or smething.like thatyou know, push him around. You know, get hollered at, see if he has any heart. That's what most people call it. If you don't have no heart you can't walk with us 'cause really when we were in elementary school we was supposed to be the toughest boys there. In order to hang with us you had to be just as rough and you had to do everything we did or you know, couldn't tell on what we did. Couldn't tell her we did that.

FW Ever see any of those guys now?

IMF Two of them.

FW Still have the same sort of friendship as you had then?

INF We not -- we don't hang together. We still friends and you know we see each other now and then. One of them is, you know, he ah singer now, you know, sing with a group and the other one he's working and in the evening at school. I mean he's working during the day and going to school at night, you know. And that's I'm usually with him sometime you know, most the time I'm with him. And the other two, they tell me one of them went into the army and theother one he just grew up fast and you know, got him a car, he big time they say.

Library of Congress

END